

Hoodeds w. to L. Roberts 11 Aug (RG) and near Riverside 25 Aug (RSS *vide* DZ).

Noteworthy distributional records included single Hermits near Grassy L.O., San Mateo Mts. 25 Aug (JEP) and Aguirre Springs 29 Sep (BZ), one to 2 Red-faceds in the San Mateo Mts. 25 Aug (JEP, JO), and a Painted Redstart in Potato Canyon, San Mateo Mts. 31 Aug (HS).

### SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

A Cassin's Sparrow nest with eggs was in the Animas Valley 22 Aug (SOW, PM); few if any nests have been reported from sw. New Mexico. Also noteworthy for the sw. were 2 Clay-colored Sparrows banded in the s. Animas Valley 7-8 Sep (AC, NM-C). Two stub-tailed Savannahs were begging food at Maxwell 11 Aug (DC). The 25 Grasshopper Sparrows in the s. Animas Valley 25 Aug (AC, NM-C) included an ad. feeding fledglings; 3 migrant Grasshoppers were on Otero Mesa 9 Oct (RM). Single migrant **Baird's Sparrows** were detected at 2 Otero Mesa sites 10 Sep and 16 Oct (RM), at Davies Tank, Tularosa Basin 26 Nov (DH), and near Deming 20 Nov (RM). Early was a Harris's Sparrow at Carlsbad 27 Sep (SW); another reached Luis Lopez 9 Nov (ph. JO).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak wandered to Chamberino 22 Nov (MS, JZ). Still in the nest was a Blue Grosbeak chick at Double Adobe, Animas Mts. 9 Sep (AC, NM-C). Lazuli Buntings migrated in large numbers in late Aug, including 28 at Albuquerque's oxbow 26 Aug (NV) and 75 in the Animas Valley 25 Aug (AC, NM-C). Noteworthy was a male Painted Bunting n. to the Mountainair area 12-13 Aug (TH); other Painteds were reported from the e. plains, lower Pecos Valley, lower R.G.V., and the Animas Valley. Further evidence of Dickcissels breeding in Colfax was furnished by a female carrying food to an unseen chick near Springer 21 Aug (DC); westerly Dickcissels were 4 at Luis Lopez 13 Sep (JO) and 3 at Percha 30 Sep (CR). Late for the n. were single Common Grackles at Maxwell 25 Nov (DC) and Las Vegas 11 Nov (JT). Noteworthy was an Orchard Oriole at Mountainair 21 Sep (JO). Quite rare in New Mexico, a **Baltimore Oriole** was near Encino 16 Sep (JO). Even more rare in the state, a **Purple Finch** was at B.L.N.W.R. 9-12 Nov (GW, ph. CR); 2 probable Purples were described from Brushy Canyon, Peloncillo Mts. 7 Oct (CL). Red Crossbills, prevalent in Jul, continued in evidence in most major mountain ranges but in diminished numbers. Continuing from late Jul, up to 3 **White-winged Crossbills**, including singing males, were at the Santa Fe ski area 4-20 Aug (WW, MS, JZ, J&KH, ph. WH), but no breeding was documented; nearby, a pair was at Hyde Memorial Park 20 Aug (J&KH), while to

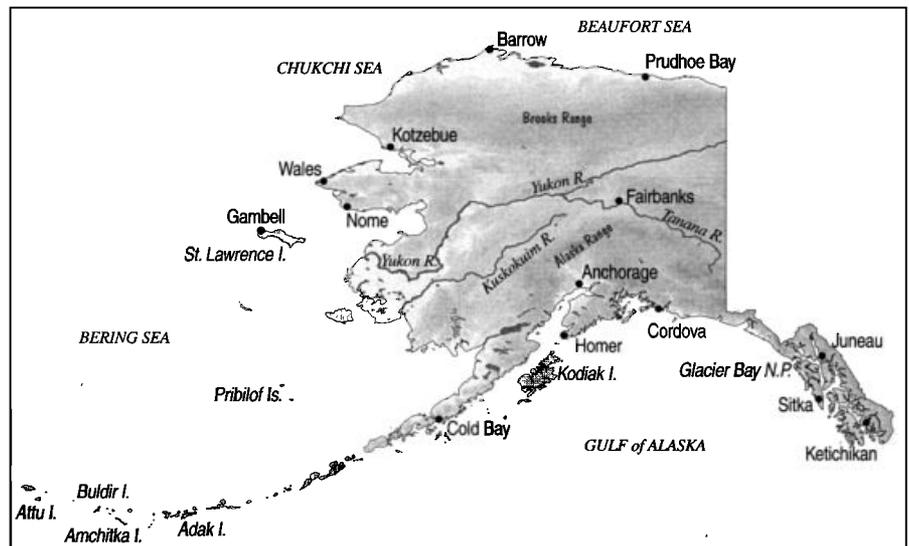
the n. a singing male was at Williams L., Taos 19 Aug (BJ). A late Lesser Goldfinch nest at Maxwell had 3 nestlings 24 Sep (DC); 3 fledglings were being fed by ads. at Madrid 20 Oct (LS). Evening Grosbeaks were restricted to the n. and included 20 at Taos 18 Aug (MS, JZ), where they favored Russian Olives, and up to 80 at Raton 27 Sep (DC).

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# Alaska



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**A**utumn 2001 produced as distinct a season of weather extremes and contrasts as we've witnessed in over a decade. And given the number of boldfaced rarities and reports of extralimital species, it was also one of the Region's most exciting in recent memory. The season's first half, well into October, showed consistently above-average temperatures. Even in the northerly latitudes, balmy conditions were clearly responsible for a protracted migration, for example at Gambell, where Lehman didn't see freezing conditions

until the last days of September. Although the norm tends to be systematic cooling and snow accumulations following a mid- to late October freeze-up, this year's freeze fell hard and fast after very mild conditions dominated the Region. By late October, near-record snows had covered habitats and bodies of water that had barely begun the typical transition into winter. This turnaround happened within a week and was followed by Arctic high pressure and unseasonably cold conditions through the remainder of the period. As could be expected, these extremes focused birders and rarities in the late season and produced a fair share of late dates of departure.

With continued coverage and later into the season, the Bering Sea vagrant season becomes

better known, with this year's finds from both continents expanding an already heady list of casual birds. Similar expanded pelagic coverage beyond the seabird breeding peak in the Western Aleutians supplements reports of the past few years, which has helped to fill gaps in our knowledge of the offshore avifauna at this time. The only shortcoming in Bering Sea fall coverage is the lack of a field presence in the Pribilofs after Labor Day. I have been heartened by the past decade's evolution of the documentation of rarities and by the generally high-quality reporting from all regular hotspots. Great strides have been made since the 1980s in this regard, as perusal of past autumn reports will show.

**Abbreviations:** A.B.O. (Alaska Bird Observatory); North Gulf (North Gulf of Alaska); S.E. (Southeast Alaska); S.C. (Southcoastal Alaska); U.C.I. (Upper Cook Inlet); Y-K Delta (Yukon-Kuskokwim R. Deltas); Referenced details, specimens, photographs, and videotapes are on file at the University of Alaska Museum. Italicized place names denote especially unusual locations for the noted species.

## LOONS THROUGH RAILS

The Nome area produced the season's only Arctic Loons, with 3 ads. in Safety Sound 22 & 30 Aug (vt WINGS); a few are being found there regularly in Aug. Local and rare from the S.E. Mainland, where suitable habitat is limited, a Common Loon family on MacDonald L. on the Cleveland Pen. 23 Aug (SCH) represented a first record from that section of s. S.E. About average were single Pied-billed Grebes from traditional fall locations—at Sitka 6 Oct-2 Nov (MET, MLW) and Ketchikan 18 Oct-19 Nov (SCH).

The season's northernmost Western Grebes reached well beyond standard sites, with singles near Eagle Beach n. of Juneau 18 Nov (PS, GVV) and Skagway 23 Nov (†JJ, AR)—there are few records n. of the greater Stikine R. delta. A late Aug transect across the W. Aleutians confirmed the increasing abundance of Laysan Albatross, with a peak of 70 counted in Kiska Pass 25 Aug (TT, LGB). Only one Short-tailed Albatross was reported this fall, from the same cruise, feeding with Red-legged Kittiwakes off Buldir I. 25 Aug (TT) Mottled Petrels were distinctly scarce in the e Bering Sea in late Aug, with the only concentrations located in >120 fathoms (>216 m) about 8 km off the sw. side of Attu, with 31 tallied between there and the International Dateline 26 Aug (TT, LGB). Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels continued a recent autumn trend and ventured inshore and to unusual locations, their wanderings highlighted by an incredible estimated 360 up Lynn Canal off Vanderbilt Reef 6 Aug (AD), another 10-30+ (maxima) at the Ketchikan

waterfront 27 Aug-22 Oct (SCH), 45 in West Behm Canal 24 Oct (AWP), 2 birds into the Bering Strait, where casual, at Gambell 6-7 & 18 Sep (SM, vt., †PEL, TJD), and a late-ish bird well up Cook Inlet off Anchorage 7 Oct (TT, DWS) also where casual. A single Leach's Storm-Petrel in the Ketchikan waterfront 10 Oct (SCH) was a 2nd local record and represents one of very few inshore S.E. occurrences.

Given the mild first half of the season, waterfowl highlights were predictably lacking and split evenly between the W. Aleutians and S.E. While Snow Goose departures were generally late, one in Anchorage 9 Oct (RP, TT) was a local extreme, and a group of 12 in Sitka 22 Nov (MET, MLW) was nearly record. Casual in the W. Aleutians, where there are sporadic fall and winter reports, were 2 Brant at Shemya 7 Oct (CS, MS). A group of 5 **Wood Ducks** appeared along Ketchikan Cr. 13 Nov (SCH) and remained in the area where a few have appeared in the past few years. After only two Alaska records through the mid-1980s, Wood Duck is nearly annual somewhere in S.E., usually in fall/winter. Two Garganeys described from Shemya 27-29 Sep (CS, MS) were the only ones of the season. Eleven Hooded Mergansers in the Juneau area 29 Oct-1 Nov+ (RJG) was this season's above-average peak count, although few were reported elsewhere. A female **Ruddy Duck** in Juneau 18 Oct (PS, BA et al.) fit the pattern of casual fall/winter appearances for S.E. For whatever reason, perhaps because of the changeover from mild conditions in late Sep, Ospreys were more common and on the move in coastal areas in late Sep, where they are often undetected. Several were reported in Juneau, through 20 Sep (BA, DM), at Kodiak 24 Sep (RAM, JBA), and in the Ketchikan area 22 Sep-4 Oct (SCH). Two Northern Goshawks were unusual beyond the taiga into coastal tundra habitat e. and w. of Nome 30 Aug (WINGS). Migrant falcons stirred things up at Shemya into Oct, where observers identified a **Eurasian Kestrel** 17-18 Oct (no details), a juv. **Eurasian Hobby** 21 Sep-5 Oct (\*), and non-*peali* Peregrines in late Sep (CS, MS). Both Eurasian Kestrel and Eurasian Hobby continue as casual migrants in the Region, mainly in spring in the W. Aleutians-Bering Sea zone—the hobby is the 2nd confirmed Aleutians fall record. Although occasional pale Peregrines are reported from the Aleutian-Commander Is., there are few confirmed records of races other than resident *peali*. Certainly near-record late for the n. Bering Sea coast was a Peregrine inland on the cen. Seward Pen. along the Noxapaga R. 16 Nov (*fide* RM), fully a month later than the latest published fall record.

Following summer sightings of lone males in similar alpine habitats, a family group of Rock Ptarmigan was located at 960 m near Mt. Reid,

*Revillagigedo I.* 4 Aug (KL, JH, *fide* SCH), the first confirmation of breeding for that island. The status of Rock Ptarmigan in S.E., especially away from Mainland habitats and s. of the Stikine R watershed, remains poorly delineated.

## PLOVERS THROUGH DOVES

Because of this fall's extensive coverage, shorebirds were well represented in the mix of rarities and spread across the breadth of the Region's coastal hotspots. Aleutian-Bering Sea highlights included: a one-day season peak of 181 Pacific Golden-Plovers at Shemya 30 Sep (CS, MS) and a very late count of 16 on freezing marshes at Gambell 29 Sep (PEL); a total of 4 Mongolian Plovers from Gambell 25 Aug-2 Sep (WINGS), a single Common Greenshank, casual in fall, at Shemya 21 Sep (CS, MS); extralimital single Lesser Yellowlegs, possibly on their way to the Palearctic, at Shemya 5-10 Sep (CS, MS) and St Paul I. 17 Aug (WINGS); 2 Spotted Redshanks at Shemya 26-27 Sep (CS, MS); 3 Red-necked Stunts at Gambell 23-28 Aug (WINGS) and 4 on St Paul 31 Aug (ST. PAUL); a Little Stint 17-19 Aug on St Paul I. (WINGS; vt., †PEL); a Temminck's Stunt 30 Aug, with no details from St. Paul I (ST PAUL); a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at St. Paul 20 Aug (WINGS); a good maximum count of 16 Long-billed Dowitchers at St. Paul 31 Aug (ST PAUL); and incredible Bering Sea Red Phalarope staging concentrations including a peak 40,000 birds off Gambell's Northwest Cape 9 Sep (PEL). With Lehman's fall summaries from Gambell over the past few years, it is clear that waters off St. Lawrence I.'s nw. shores provide ideal staging habitat for much of the Region's Red Phalarope population.

Notable shorebird reports elsewhere included an unprecedented 6 Mongolian Plovers, including ads. and juvs., in alpine habitat on Tern Mtn on the Y-K. Delta Mainland 2-7 Sep (ph. FB, ph DR), where there are few records; a season high and late 17 Killdeer in Juneau 11 Nov (m ob), a very late Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Kodiak 23 Nov (RAM) and a late Long-billed Dowitcher at Juneau 12 Nov (RJG); unusual inshore and very late Red-necked Phalarope concentrations in the Ketchikan area, with a maximum 3200 on 28 Aug and 3 still there 18 Oct (SCH); and U.C.I.'s 3rd and latest Red Phalarope at freeze-up in Anchorage 21 Oct (TT).

As has become expected, wandering gulls made big news, mainly from standard sites in the s. half of the Region. Franklin's Gulls made perhaps their best-ever showing in the Region, with a juv. at Juneau (4th local record) 19 Aug (PS, GVV, RJG), an ad. n. to Anchorage (3rd U.C.I. record and first in fall) 1-11 Oct (DWS, DFD, RLS, TT et al.), and up to 3 in Ketchikan, where casual in fall, 13 Aug-12 Oct (ph. SCH). A Black-



A Little Stint on St. Paul Island 17-19 August 2001 was a casual visitor to western Alaska and the Bering Sea—in contrast to Red-necked Stint, which is seen in small numbers annually here in spring and fall. Note in this image the distinct dark spots forming streaks within the (buff) wash on the sides of the breast (in Red-necked, the streaks are weak, faint, blurry, and dusky), the bold split supercilium, the pale forehead, and the bill shape. *Photograph from videotape by Paul E. Lehman.*

headed Gull that hung around Gambell 26 Aug-4 Sep (vt. PEL) was one of few from the n. Bering Sea and St. Lawrence I.'s first in fall. Ketchikan's 4th **Heerman's Gull** was a second-year bird near town 28 Aug (†SCH, AWP). The Region's first was discovered in Ketchikan in Aug 1991 with subsequent finds from Sitka. A molting second-winter **Black-tailed Gull** was drawn into the Kodiak gull hordes 27 Sep-2 Oct (ph. RAM), the first for the archipelago and one of the latest of few fall records. Of the scattered Ring-billed Gull reports, significant were records of 9 in Ketchikan 28 Aug (SCH) and at least 2 in the Anchorage area, where casual, 30 Aug-13 Oct (DWS, RLS, TT). California Gulls established a new high for the Region, with 3500 counted around Ketchikan 28 Aug (SCH), while a second-winter bird in the Kodiak area 30 Sep-30 Oct (ph. RAM) represents one of the Region's westernmost.

The status of various gulls in the Bering Sea in the autumn has become better understood since the start of recent birding coverage at Gambell at this season. This year's noteworthy Gambell reports included several Nearctic *smithsonianus* Herring Gulls late Aug-27 Sep (PEL, SM) and an ad. Thayer's Gull 15 Sep (†PEL, †TJD, ND), one of few substantiated from the Bering Sea. North Gulf Slaty-backed Gulls included an ad. in Juneau 14 Sep and 25-27 Oct (PS, NM) and up to 4 in Kodiak 23 Sep-15 Oct (RAM, JBA, JD). Heintz included notes on a dark ad. Western Gull from the Ketchikan harbor 21 Nov (†SCH), where post-breeders have wandered occasionally since the early 1990s. Up to 4 Ross's Gulls turned up in the Gambell surf after a cold front, almost record early from 28 Sep-10 Oct (vt. PEL, DC). Most

Ross's Gulls move into winter areas of the w. Bering Sea/North Pacific later in the season and probably along the w. side of the Bering Strait.

With few fall data after Aug departures from known staging sites, notable Caspian Tern reports included one in Sitka 9-10 Sep (MET, MLW), where casual, and singles in Ketchikan 3 & 22 Sep (AWP, SCH), a local first in fall. Staging Arctic Terns at Kodiak in early Aug built to an impressive 400+ on 10 Aug (RAM), certainly one of the Region's highest counts away from breeding colonies. A few Arctics lingered to 19 Sep (PEL), record late for Gambell. The season's only Mourning Dove was one in Sitka on the outer S.E. coast 29 Nov (MET, MLW).

### OWLS THROUGH THRUSHES

Snowy Owls staged a coastal push, with birds detected at w. coast sites between Kotzebue, Nome, Kodiak and as far s. as Juneau and Ketchikan, where they are sporadic and rare, 30 Aug-7 Nov (m. ob.). More unusual were 2 in Anchorage 17-22 Oct (PP, RLS) and 2+ around Fairbanks and farther e. at Delta Junction, both in late Oct (*vide* A.B.O.). At least 3 Common Nighthawks were noted in Juneau 27 Aug-11 Sep (GVV et al.), the only report and the site of most fall reports. One of the earliest of the Region's few fall reports, a **Fork-tailed Swift** hawked insects along the coastal bluffs at Shemya 18 Aug (CS, MS). Post-breeding Rufous Hummingbirds wandered to extremes to the w., with 2 at L. Clark 9-13 Sep (*vide* SS), and n., with a single in Delta Junction 12 Sep (*vide* A.B.O.).

*Epidonax* dominated the season's flycatcher highlights, including an unprecedented **Least Flycatcher**, the Bering Sea's first, skulking around the Gambell middens 19 Sep (†PEL, ND, TJD), and a "**Western-type**" Flycatcher there 1-2 Sep (†PEL, ND, EB, vt. †SM). The Western-type was thought by the observers to be a Pacific-slope Flycatcher and was, incredibly, St. Lawrence I.'s 2nd such record. Another **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, the 6th, was netted and banded in Fairbanks 11 Aug (A.B.O.). Most of the Region's dozen or so reports are scattered around the Interior from early summer. **Sky Lark** was added to the St. Lawrence I. fall list with a single in the Gambell middens 24 Sep (†PEL, ND)—there are about 6 records from spring there. A juv. **Purple Martin**, well described from Juneau 24 Sep (†MS et al.), constitutes Alaska's first fall record and follows summer observations from the same general area. After a half-dozen spring overshoot Purple Martin reports from the 1970s, there have been few since. A brave Tree Swallow wandered across the Aleutians to Shemya 20 Sep (CS, MS). Most of the few Aleutian reports are from farther e. in the Chain (none w. of Buldir) from spring. Farther ne. into the Bering Sea at St. Paul I. came

a convincing description of a **Common House-Martin** 28-30 Aug (ST PAUL, †DL), a 3rd Pribilof record and one of few for the Region in fall. Earlier than most of the handful of S.E. winter reports was a single Mountain Chickadee near Juneau 14 Oct (GVV).

Unusually late and northernmost of the few fall Bering Sea records was a male Siberian Rubythroat at Gambell 24 Sep (†PEL, ND). Swainson's Thrush was added to the diverse list of Aleutian avifauna with a single found in the Shemya thickets 10 Oct (CS, MS\*). There are few records w. of Mainland taiga breeding sites at the base of the Alaska Pen. and only one other Bering Sea island account. The season's latest Hermit Thrushes included singles at Anchorage 23 Oct (RLS), U.C.I.'s latest ever, at Kodiak 3 Nov (RAM) and Sitka 20 Nov (MET, MLW). Freeze-up typically pushes most *Catharus* out of the Region by late Oct, and until the late 1980s there were few records past 1 Nov. First in fall for Gambell, where there are a dozen spring reports, was a single Hermit Thrush in the middens 13-15 Sep (SM, ND, PEL). This season's only fall report was a single Eye-browed Thrush at Shemya 3 Oct (CS, MS). An intriguing call and follow-up by A.B.O. staff turned up a **Brown Thrasher** at a Fairbanks feeder 28 Sep-26 Nov (EC ph., A.B.O. et al.), the Region's latest. All but two of the five previous records have come from the Interior. Yet another **Siberian Accentor**, still casual and most often encountered in fall on Bering Sea islands, was found the Gambell middens 21-26 Sep (vt, †PEL, ND, DC), where most of the state's fall reports have originated.

### WARBLERS THROUGH FRINGILLIDS

As is typical in fall, warbler highlights were of Bering Sea extralimitals and late departures. The offshore warbler push documented in the Gambell middens on St. Lawrence I. was remarkable, with four warbler species discovered: an imm. **Tennessee Warbler**, obviously a first in the Bering Sea and W. Alaska, 22 Sep (vt., †PEL, ND), 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, one *celata* 13 Sep & one *lutescens* 19 Sep (†PEL, ND, TJD, SM, EB), a species casual away from S.C.; an imm. Yellow Warbler 10 Sep (EB, †PEL, ND, vt. SM); and 26 Yellow-rumped Warblers 26 Aug (†PEL) and 17 Sep (vt., †PEL, ND, TJD). Warbler rarities of note were a imm. male **Magnolia** from Juneau 29 Aug (†DT, TP), casual in fall for the Region in S.E., a very rare **Interior American Redstart** from the Tok banding station 4 Sep (ph. KWL), and Alaska's first and surprisingly late **Black-throated Blue Warbler** from Juneau feeders 22 Nov-Dec (DW, GVV, SZ, ph. EC, ph. PS). The closest known summer records to S.E. appear to be from se. Saskatchewan, although there are a few fall and winter reports from British Columbia. And



Alaska's first Black-throated Blue Warbler was this striking male at feeders around Tee Harbor, Juneau from 22 November into December (here 1 December 2001); the nearest record is from south-eastern Saskatchewan! Photograph by Ed Clark.

given the fair number of Pacific Coast fall records, Black-throated Blue was anticipated in Alaska someday. The season's latest warblers lingered, as usual, in S.E., with an Orange-crowned in Ketchikan 13 Nov, 2 Yellow-rumpeds in Ketchikan 23 Nov, a single Common Yellowthroat near Ketchikan 14 Oct (SCH), and one Wilson's in Juneau 12 Nov (PS, GVV).

Sparrows were well represented in observers' reports, at least until the Nov high pressure cold settled in. Rare offshore in S.E. were single Chipping Sparrows at Ketchikan 23-25 Oct (JFK, ph SCH) and Sitka 24 Nov (MET, MLW). The Region's first fall and 2nd ever migrant **Brewer's Sparrow**, an imm. showing some plumage subtleties of *taverneri*, was attracted to Koerner's Ketchikan feeder 25-31 Oct (JFK, ph., †SCH, AWP). The species is known in Alaska only from limited treeline willow habitats localized on the n. flank of the Nutzotin Mts. in the e. Interior near the Canadian border; a spring bird from Hyder is the only prior record away from there. Rare Bering Sea sparrows included a *zaboria* Fox Sparrow from Gambell 22-25 Sep (vt. PEL, ND) and a Lincoln's there 26 Sep (vt. PEL, ND), a 2nd for St Lawrence I. Seward always attracts interesting late fall sparrows and this year produced yet another White-throated 24 Nov and a less common Harris's the same day in a different junco flock (NS, RLS, TT). S.E. White-throateds were above the usual one to 2, with 2 in Juneau 15-24 Oct (PS, LD) and at least 5 in Ketchikan 1 Oct-30 Nov+ (JFK, SCH, AWP). One of Gambell's big highlights was what was probably a single **Little Bunting** in the middens 19-24 Sep (†PEL, ND). All but one of the Region's half dozen reports are from the Bering Sea, mainly from Gambell, in Sep. A clean winter ad. McKay's Bunting at Gambell 22 Sep (ND, vt. PEL) provided one of few migrant or dispersal dates to w. coast wintering areas.

MacIntosh submitted excellent documentation of an imm. **Black-headed Grosbeak** that spent 27-28 Oct feeding in *Rubus* thickets in his Kodiak yard (ph., †RAM). This is the latest of the three fall Alaska records, the first of which was in mid-Sep from Middleton I. (e. of Kodiak in the North Gulf). Bramblings were scarce, especially given the Bering Sea coverage, with a few at Shemya 9 Sep-13 Oct (CS, MS), one in Juneau 19-22 Oct (PS, BA, GVV), and at least 4 from Gambell middens 17-26 Sep (TJD, vt. PEL, ND). The only significant finch reports included an at-sea male Red Crossbill from St. Paul I. 19-23 Aug (vt., †PEL; ST PAUL), about the 5th for the Pribilofs, a rare St. Lawrence I. record of Pine Siskin at Gambell 26 Sep (ph. DC), and a very rare W. Aleutian Pine Siskin from Shemya 8 Oct (CS, MS\*).

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# British Columbia–Yukon



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Late, late, late are three words that best describe the fall migration in the Region. The weather remained unusually mild right up until the first winter cold snap (in the last week of November), and snowpacks were naturally minimal until the cold weather hit. By the end